In the Claims:

1. (currently amended) A multi-fiber ferrule having a front face and an opposed rear face and defining a longitudinal axis in a lengthwise direction, the multi-fiber ferrule comprising:

an optical fiber receiving portion adjacent the front face for receiving an end portion of at least one optical fiber, said optical fiber receiving portion comprising a plurality of optical fiber bores extending parallel to the longitudinal axis; .

a lead-in portion adjacent the rear face for receiving and guiding the at least one optical fiber into the multi-fiber ferrule; and

an alignment portion between the optical fiber receiving portion and the lead-in portion for receiving the at least one optical fiber and aligning the end portion of the at least one optical fiber with a respective one of the plurality of optical fiber bores wherein the alignment portion is configured to receive at least two optical fibers and is adapted to separate and align the at least two optical fibers parallel to the longitudinal axis in the lengthwise direction.

2. (canceled) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 1, wherein the alignment portion is configured to receive at least two optical fibers and is adapted to separate and align the at least two optical fibers parallel to the longitudinal axis in the lengthwise direction.

3. (currently amended) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 1 ~~claim 2~~, wherein the lead-in portion expands radially outward from the longitudinal axis in a direction extending from the alignment portion toward the rear face of the multi-fiber ferrule such that the lead-in portion guides the at least two optical fibers into the alignment portion generally parallel to the longitudinal axis.

4. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the alignment portion has a generally oval shape in cross section and also comprises at least one separating rib for separating a plurality of optical fibers and aligning the plurality of optical fibers generally parallel to the longitudinal axis.

5. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the alignment portion has a generally figure-eight shape in cross section for maintaining a plurality of optical fibers generally parallel to the longitudinal axis.

6. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 1, wherein the alignment portion comprises a ribbon alignment portion and a buffered fiber alignment portion, the ribbon alignment portion adjacent the optical fiber receiving portion and the buffered fiber alignment portion adjacent the lead-in portion.

7. (currently amended) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 6, wherein the ribbon alignment portion has a generally rectangular shape in cross section for maintaining the optical fibers of ~~the~~ an optical fiber ribbon parallel to the longitudinal axis.

8. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 6, wherein the buffered fiber alignment portion comprises an elongated portion that has a generally oval shape in cross section.

9. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 6, wherein the buffered fiber alignment portion comprises an elongated portion that has an oval shape in cross section.

10. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 6, wherein the buffered fiber alignment portion has a cross section shape configured as two truncated circles adjacent one another.

11. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 6, wherein the buffered fiber alignment portion is sized to allow at least one buffered fiber to pass therethrough.

12. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 11, wherein the at least one buffered fiber is about 650 microns in diameter.

13. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 6, wherein the ribbon alignment portion is configured to align each of two optical fibers in a ribbon matrix with a respective optical fiber bore in the optical fiber receiving portion.

14. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 1, wherein the ferrule has an MT RJ configuration.

15. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 3, wherein the lead-in portion linearly expands in a radially outward direction from the longitudinal axis.

16. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 3, wherein the lead-in portion expands radially outward from the longitudinal axis in a nonlinear manner such that the lead-in portion defines a curved wall.

17. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule according to claim 3, wherein the lead-in portion linearly

expands in a radially outward direction from the longitudinal axis such that the lead-in portion has a generally frusto-conical shape.

18. (currently amended) A multi-fiber ferrule body comprising:

a front face;

an opposed rear face;

an optical fiber receiving portion extending for a least a portion of a distance between the front and rear faces, the optical fiber receiving portion being adjacent the front face of the multi-fiber ferrule body to receive an end of at least ~~one optical fiber~~ two optical fibers and comprising a plurality of optical fiber bores extending from the front face toward the rear face; and

an alignment portion disposed between the optical fiber receiving portion and the rear face for receiving the at least ~~one optical fiber~~ two optical fibers and aligning the end portion of the at least ~~one optical fiber~~ two optical fibers with a respective ~~one~~ two of the plurality of optical fiber bores, wherein a portion of the alignment portion has a rectangular cross section and is configured to align each of two optical fibers in a ribbon matrix with a respective one of the plurality of optical fiber bores;

wherein the at least one optical fiber is selected from the group consisting of a buffered optical fiber and an optical fiber ribbon.

19. (currently amended) The multi-fiber ferrule body of claim 18, further comprising a lead-in portion disposed between the rear face and the alignment portion, the lead-in portion expanding radially outward such that the lead-in portion is capable of guiding the at least ~~one optical fiber~~ two optical fibers into the adjacent alignment portion.

20. (original) The multi-fiber ferrule body of claim 18, wherein at least a portion of the alignment portion is elongated and has a generally oval shape in cross section.

21. (canceled) The multi-fiber ferrule body according to claim 18, wherein a portion of the alignment portion has a rectangular cross section and is configured to align each of two optical fibers in a ribbon matrix with a respective one of the plurality of optical fiber bores.

22. (original) A multi-fiber ferrule having a front face and an opposed rear face and defining a longitudinal axis in a lengthwise direction, the multi-fiber ferrule comprising:

an optical fiber receiving portion adjacent the front face for receiving the end portions of a plurality of optical fibers, said optical fiber receiving portion comprising a plurality of optical fiber bores extending parallel to the longitudinal axis;

a lead-in portion adjacent the rear face for receiving and guiding the plurality of optical fibers into the multi-fiber ferrule; and

an alignment portion between the optical fiber receiving portion and the lead-in portion for receiving the plurality of optical fibers and aligning the end portion of each of the plurality of optical fibers with a respective one of the plurality of optical fiber bores, the alignment portion comprising at least a portion having a generally oval cross section and at least one separating rib for separating the plurality of optical fibers.